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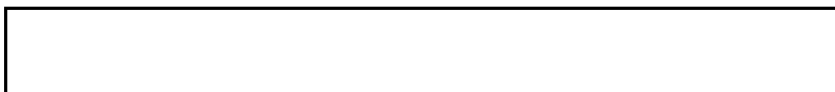
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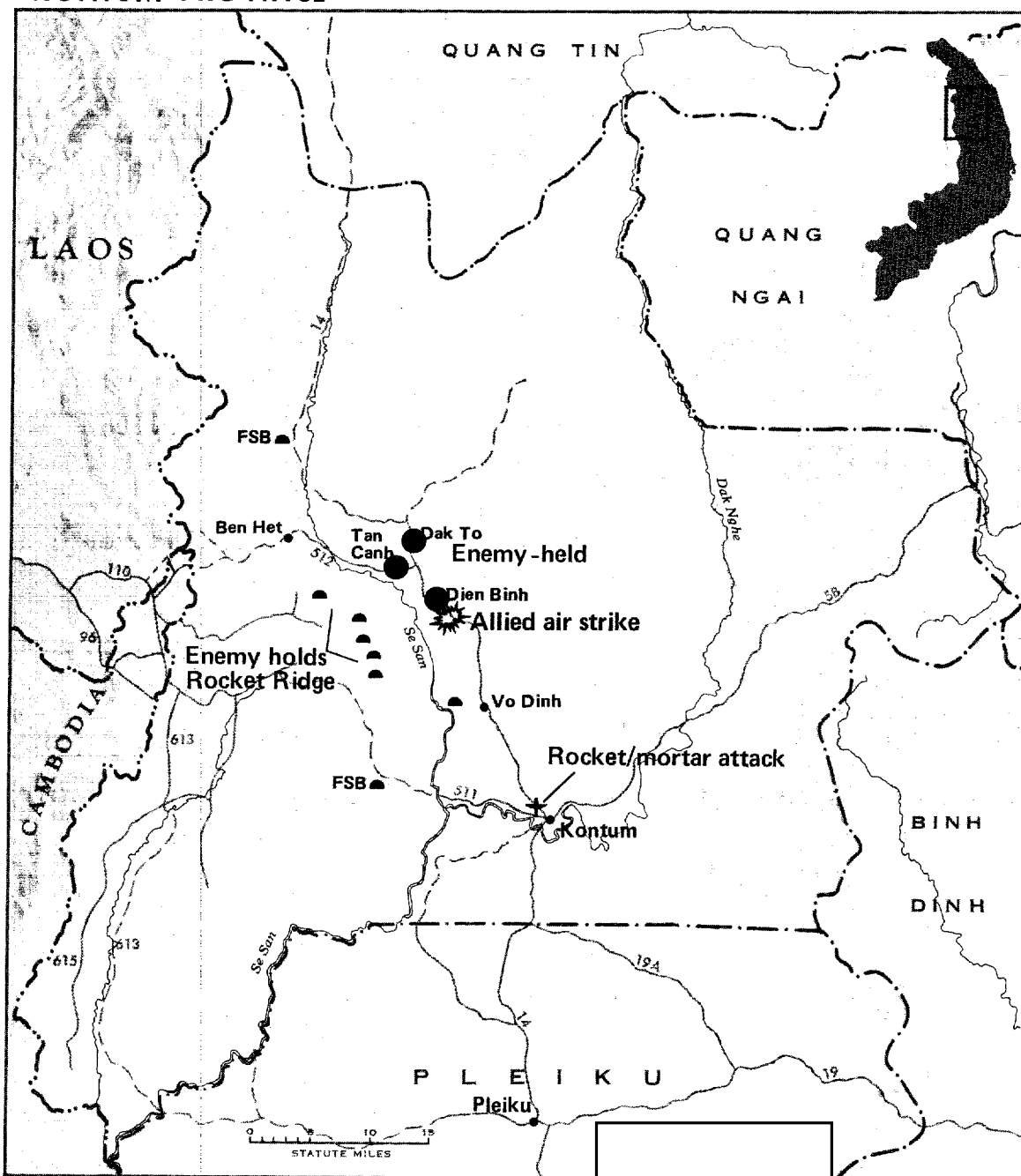
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KONTUM PROVINCE



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SOUTH VIETNAM: North Vietnamese forces continue to advance toward the capital of Kontum Province.

Yesterday, enemy units moved down Route 14 as far as Dien Binh, but destruction of the bridge across the river by allied air strikes may have slowed their southward push. The Communists are also consolidating their positions in the Dak To area and are moving heavy artillery atop Rocket Ridge. Kontum city and the nearby airfield have been struck by rocket and mortar fire. Many of the refugees who have been streaming into the city are now heading south toward Pleiku. Remnants of the South Vietnamese 22nd Division continue to arrive at government-held positions, [REDACTED] suggests that about half of the approximately seven-battalion force in the Dak To - Tan Canh area when it was attacked may be regrouped into a fighting force.

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In the northern provinces, there are numerous signs of enemy preparations for further attacks. The relative lull in enemy action in Quang Tri Province undoubtedly has allowed many Communist units to resupply for renewed assaults against South Vietnamese positions in the Dong Ha - Quang Tri city region.

The situation at An Loc remains stable, and the South Vietnamese have taken advantage of a decrease in enemy shellings to reinforce and resupply by air the troops still holding on to the provincial capital. Although enemy action remains fairly high in the Mekong Delta, no significant gains have been made by either side in the past several days. [REDACTED]

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EGYPT-USSR: Overt Egyptian concern over the course of Soviet-Egyptian relations has become more pronounced.

During recent meetings with various Egyptian groups, President Sadat has been confronted with a variety of questions reflecting some worry and considerable cynicism over the degree of Soviet support for Egypt. In discussions with officials of the government-sponsored party on Monday, such questions were unusually pointed. Sadat was asked to what extent Moscow was committed to supplying weapons to counter the delivery of US aircraft to Israel, and whether the Soviets had in fact refused to supply Egypt with "MIG-23s" or their equivalent. Other queries expressed concern that Cairo was too closely aligned with Moscow and raised the possibility of obtaining offensive weapons from countries other than the Soviet Union.

For the most part, Sadat attempted to ease doubts raised by the questioners and to reassure his audience that Moscow was continuing to supply Egypt with needed military equipment. He acknowledged that he was short of certain items, and had to wait for the delivery of others. He was careful, however, to follow these remarks with others emphasizing the friendly relations between the two countries.

Sadat added an extremely frank description of the Egyptian-Soviet military relationship when he stated that he was willing to accept assistance from both the East and the West, but that if only the Soviet Union is willing to help, "I cannot say no." Sadat denied that there was any Soviet pressure for the establishment of military bases in Egypt, and repeatedly declared that he would not grant that privilege to a foreign power. He did acknowledge, however, that certain "facilities" were being allowed the USSR at Egypt's Mediterranean ports.

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Public concern over the issue is not likely to force Sadat to alter the relationship between the two countries and may, in fact, provide further ammunition for future arms requests from the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Cairo radio has announced that Sadat will arrive in Moscow tomorrow, and will immediately begin discussions with Soviet officials. [REDACTED]

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THAILAND-CHINA: Bangkok's public acceptance of an indirect Chinese invitation to a Thai sports team is an important step in its guarded effort to establish contacts with Peking.

General Praphat, deputy chairman of the military ruling body, has told the Thai press that the government will permit a Thai badminton team to visit Peking. He stated that an invitation had come via the Hong Kong badminton association, and that no date could be set for the trip until Peking issues a formal invitation. This could pose a problem, for while Peking appears to want a Thai team to visit China, it may prefer to handle negotiations for the trip unofficially and informally through the Hong Kong channel.

The Thai apparently regard the prospective visit as a trial balloon. Praphat told the US ambassador that Bangkok would closely watch the reception given Thai players in Peking, although no officials authorized to engage in political talks would accompany the team. He expressed particular interest in a possible return visit by a Chinese team as a test of the reaction of Thailand's large Chinese community. Thai leaders have long been concerned that an improvement in relations with Peking could cause them trouble with their own Chinese.

Bangkok's current receptivity to a sports exchange is in line with the decisions made at a high-level meeting on the China question last November. The government decided then to continue the ban on private trade and contacts with China. Praphat's recent statement that Thai businessmen would not be permitted to attend the Canton trade fair indicates that this policy is still in force. Although the Thai feel obliged in the wake of developments in US-Chinese relations to establish contacts with Peking, they are still suspicious of Chinese intentions, particularly with regard to support of the Thai insurgents. [REDACTED]

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CEYLON-USSR-CHINA: Moscow is trying to improve its relations with Colombo, partly to counter Peking's growing influence.

Two Soviet destroyers are scheduled to visit Ceylon for six days beginning on 28 April, the first such visit by Soviet naval combatants to Ceylon in three years. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Soviets apparently want to test Ceylonese nonalignment in the wake of recent visits to Ceylon by US naval ships and the US Pacific commander. In addition, the US chargé d'affaires in Colombo reports that the Ceylonese have agreed to a high-level official Soviet visit no earlier than July.

Soviet-Ceylonese relations have been under some strain during the past year, largely because of Ceylonese suspicions that Moscow may have had something to do with the island-wide insurrection that wracked Ceylon a year ago. The mistrust has persisted despite a lack of specific evidence of Soviet involvement and Moscow's provision of considerable military assistance to Colombo following the uprisings. Moreover, Mrs. Bandaranaike's party has been bickering lately with its Moscow-oriented Communist coalition partners. The Soviets may hope that a show of friendship will reduce the possibility that Colombo's irritation at the local Communists could adversely affect state relations.

Moscow's current interest in Ceylon may also be a result, in part, of recent Chinese activity. Last month Mrs. Bandaranaike's government, worried about the possibility of a new outbreak of insurgency, asked Peking for arms assistance, and the Chinese have moved quickly to fulfill the request. Peking and Colombo have also agreed to establish a joint shipping service between the two countries, with China providing Ceylon with an interest-free credit for purchasing two ships. Chinese economic assistance to Ceylon since the late 1950s, which includes a \$25-million hard currency credit last year, has totaled some \$85 million--more than double the amount extended by the Soviets. [REDACTED]

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FRANCE: Although the referendum on Common Market expansion fell well short of President Pompidou's hopes, his opponents probably will not be able to turn the results to their advantage.

The opposition parties, however, can claim a victory of sorts. The government had campaigned vigorously to keep the abstention rate close to its normal level for referenda, about 21 percent. Instead, abstentions rose to almost 40 percent, a high for which the French Socialist Party takes credit. The French Communist Party (PCF) claims responsibility for the negative vote of almost a third of those who went to the polls. Even though 68 percent of those voting supported the government, the over-all result clearly is less than the massive approval Pompidou had hoped to win.

Nonetheless, the government profited initially from its decision to call a referendum and probably will suffer little lasting damage. The decision to stage the referendum drove a wedge between the Communists and Socialists and slowed their drive toward a joint legislative program. At their congress in mid-March, the Socialists had decided to begin negotiations with the PCF on such a program--a move welcomed by the PCF. Although the two parties probably will still reach an alliance for the parliamentary elections next spring, there is little chance that they will be able to agree on a program for governing that will present an attractive alternative to the electorate.

The lack of an effective platform from which to exploit the referendum results is a key problem facing the opposition parties. Parliamentary elections are not scheduled until next spring and Pompidou almost certainly will not advance the date, as had been rumored he would do if the referendum were a stunning victory for the government. Moreover,

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under the present Constitution with a strong executive, the parliament has proved increasingly ineffective as a vehicle for opposition views. Pompidou, on the other hand, can use the considerable powers of the presidency to remind those inside and--perhaps more importantly--outside France that he has a mandate to continue his policies toward Europe.

All parties have professed satisfaction with the referendum by underscoring one or another figure. Communist voters probably accounted for a large proportion of the 18 percent of negative votes; the party traditionally controls about 20 percent of the electorate. The high abstention rate may have resulted in part from a widespread belief that the referendum was meaningless because the issue of Common Market expansion had been settled already, and from a desire to use the occasion to express dissatisfaction with the government in general.

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URUGUAY: The MLN/Tupamaros kidnaped opposition Blanco congressional leader Hector Gutierrez on 24 April apparently with the aim of convincing him of the government's involvement in extralegal and counterterror operations. Gutierrez, who heads the Chamber of Deputies, was held less than 24 hours by the Tupamaros, during which time he reportedly questioned a captured police official who has admitted belonging to an anti-guerrilla "death squad." Gutierrez is the only establishment politician who has sought to maintain a dialogue with leftist students and labor leaders. Last week the Tupamaros provided legislators and the press with copies of a "confession" written by this same policeman. Although the government has already promised to investigate charges of right-wing terrorism, the kidnapping of Gutierrez appears calculated further to embarrass President Bordaberry on this issue.

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RWANDA - NORTH KOREA: Rwanda and North Korea have decided to establish diplomatic relations, according to the Soviet ambassador in Kigali. The decision, yet to be made public, became known at a diplomatic dinner on 22 April for a North Korean goodwill delegation that has been in Rwanda for the past week. The Rwandan Government apparently feels that recognition is a logical follow-up to its recognition of Peking last November, despite the fact that it continues to have diplomatic relations with South Korea through Seoul's ambassador in Uganda. Rwanda probably hopes to carry out relations with both Koreas through non-resident ambassadors. Rwandan recognition will be the latest step in Pyongyang's current campaign to enhance its international standing. [REDACTED]

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